

Nigeria



Investment to date: USD 8,830,000
Investment started: 2016
Current investment: USD 4,939,000

Drivers of Violent Extremism in Nigeria

GCERF consultations and its grantees' communities of practice have identified the principal drivers of violent extremism in Nigeria as:

- Mistrust in the government and security forces, lack of socio-economic opportunities
- Religious and ethnic divisions
- Poverty

Extremist groups present themselves as alternative service providers and offer protection for the poor and socially marginalised, as well as presenting a pathway for communities to demonstrate their grievances with the federal government.

GCERF in Nigeria

Since 2016, GCERF has been working in communities in parts of the Middle Belt as part of a strategy of inoculation in areas that are vulnerable to but are not yet as deeply affected by violent extremism as the North-East. GCERF's second round of funding in this region will finish at the end of 2021. GCERF works with the Nigerian government, in particular the Office of the National Security Advisor, to support the implementation of its national action plans and policy framework through targeted investment in local organisations. Their programming focuses on building structures that enable communities to mobilise and respond effectively to challenges, including:

- Development of conflict resolution mechanisms
- Advocacy to develop and implement PVE-responsive policies
- Youth peace camps and subsequent youth peace ambassador networks
- Livelihoods and skills training
- Capacity building for security agencies and informal governance actors
- Peace and digital clubs in schools
- Dialogues and response planning in local communities.

The third round of funding will expand programming into the northwestern states of Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, and Sokoto in response to the growing extremist threat and limited programming in these areas.



Portfolio Overview as of September 2021

| Partner Name | Funding since | No of CSOs | Focus populations | Key activities |
|--|---------------|------------|--|---|
| Action Aid Nigeria | 2016 | 3 | Local governments, women, unemployed youth | CARTs (see case study); policy advocacy, community dialogues and trainings: skill acquisition for key populations |
| Women's Environmental Programme | 2016 | 3 | Local governments, youth | Youth mentorship, policy advocacy for Benue Youth Commission Bill, Peace/PVE media training for influencers |
| Institute for Governance and Social Research | 2016 | 1 | In and out of school youth and women | Peace clubs in schools, youth peace camps, skill acquisition and empowerment of youth and women |

Results



Total direct beneficiaries: 336,500

Total indirect beneficiaries: 3,124,225

Main leverage point: social cohesion

Programme Outputs

Round 1

- 62 advocacy meetings, visits, or initiatives
- 1,950 change agents developed and mentored
- 4 Community Action Response Teams developed
- 396 conflict resolution mechanisms established
- 729 traditional media/radio programmes developed and disseminated
- 939 leaders and youth trained in leadership skills, conflict resolution, and peace advocacy
- 585 security personnel trained in community policing
- 246 people trained as mentors or peer educators
- 2,060 people trained in PVE, conflict sensitivity, critical thinking, or conflict resolution skills

Round 2: Progress to Date (final data not yet available)

- 2,601 beneficiaries of capacity building for local government or key stakeholders
- 3,376 participants in interfaith or intercommunity dialogues
- 2,643 participants in community policing, watch groups, or early warning activities
- 7,761 people used conflict resolution and mediation platforms
- 20,832 participants in town hall meetings or advocacy initiatives

Youth Resolving Conflict

The farmer/herder conflict is a significant source of violence in the Middle Belt in Nigeria, and leaves communities and individuals vulnerable to exploitation and recruitment by violent extremist groups. GCERF's partner in Nigeria worked with young people through a series of trainings and youth camps to train them as Youth Peace Ambassadors and help them to play an active role in the peaceful resolution of local conflicts.

In 2020, in Pankshin, Plateau state, tensions arose among local communities after a cow belonging to Fulani herders was killed. Such incidents typically result in violent retaliations and conflict. To ensure a peaceful resolution of the situation, the village head called a Youth Peace Ambassador familiar with the Fulani community.

Following investigations and negotiations, the issue was resolved peacefully after the perpetrators were found and handed over to the authorities. According to Ayuba, "while in camp, we were taught how to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner. Since then, I have been using this skill to settle disputes in my community. I also have a good relationship with the Fulanis in my community, so when this issue came up, the village head sent for me and thankfully, we were able to resolve it without violence."

Participant Testimony

"Coming together to receive capacity development for PVE, Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms, and the various dialogue and engagement forums has brought us together, shown us the need to work together and **build our own local structures that are currently helping us to find solutions to this issue of violent extremism** that is threatening our communities."

- Traditional Ruler in Benue State

Story of Change: Socioeconomic opportunities

Nguper is a young widow in Kwande, Benue State who benefitted from livelihood skills training run by Women's Environmental Programme, GCERF's local partner.

"Since the death of my husband, who was killed during an attack on our community by bandits, my children and I have been suffering because what we made from farming was not enough to both feed us and to sell extra. I was selected to learn baking as part of this programme and this has really helped me. I make snacks and sale to get money, I can now take care of my children's needs."

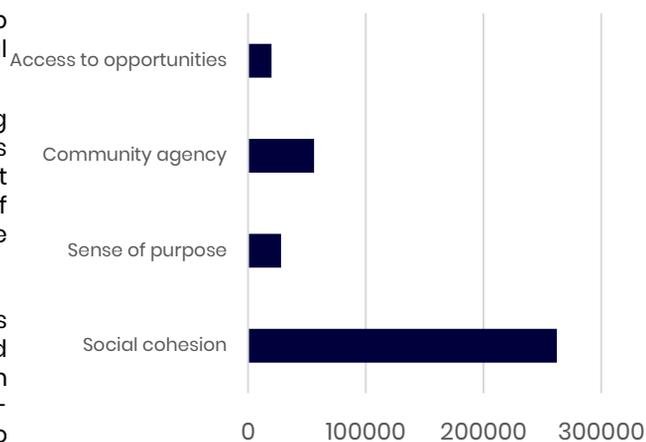


Figure 1: direct beneficiaries by focus area 2016-2021

Results



Total direct beneficiaries: 336,500
Total indirect beneficiaries: 3,124,225
Main leverage point: social cohesion

Successful Youth-Led Advocacy: The Kogi Youth Bill

On 24 April 2019, the Governor of Kogi State signed into law the Kogi State Youth Development Commission Bill, which establishes a **multi-stakeholder Youth Development Commission**, whose mandate is to increase socio-economic opportunities for youth, reduce anti-social behaviour, and empower young people. The Bill is one of the critical outcomes of the grant implemented by ActionAid Nigeria.

The Bill is the result of a **youth-led advocacy process**, in which the youth were first trained in advocacy skills and strategies, a participatory write-shop for the bill was conducted, and youth were then supported to form the Kogi Youth Advocacy Cluster. The Cluster developed the idea of creating a Youth Development Commission as the primary goal and engaged actors whose public support was essential for the Bill and those directly linked with the law-making and policy processes. To harness their support, the young people organised road walks, town hall meetings, advocacy visits, roundtables, peaceful protests, and social media campaigns.

Achievement of project outcomes: Round 1 results

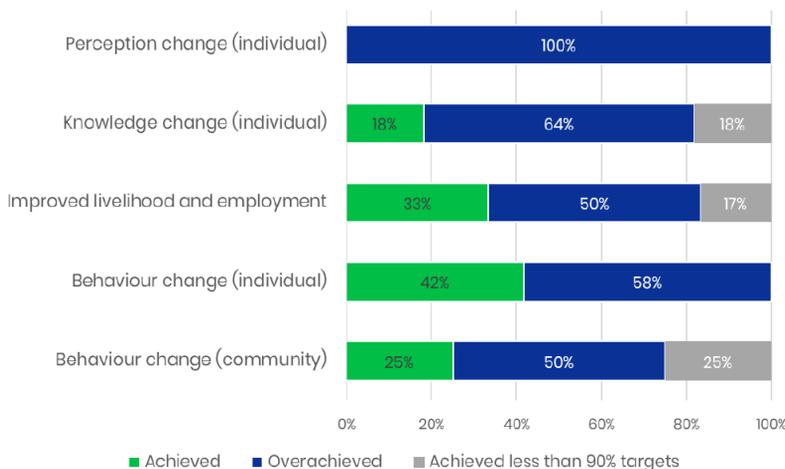


Figure 2: achievement of Round 1 project outcome targets (June 2016–December 2018)

BENEFICIARY TESTIMONY

"An invitation to an interfaith dialogue came to my church and as a woman leader I was one of those to accompany the Imam to the meeting. I was glad I did, the facilitators led discussions on peace and PVE in our community, I was happy to hear other parents share the same concerns I had. We did not just have robust engagements, **we have decided to hold meetings for young people in our places of worship every Friday** to share information with our imams and young people, **the issues of crime and VE are been addressed from a religious angle** and since my children are always there, I believe we are on the right path."

- Female religious leader who participated in interfaith dialogues in Benue State

Community Resilience Beyond Violent Extremism

As in many countries, the Nigerian government and healthcare system have struggled to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, mechanisms that were set up through two rounds of GCERF funding proved to be **effective in responding to the crisis**. Youth peace ambassadors, who had been trained in advocacy for peace and conflict resolution, joined the local official COVID-19 Monitoring and Enforcement Teams. They helped **raise awareness** about effective COVID-19 prevention measures, and **deescalated conflicts** caused by the measures imposed, using the skills they learned through a GCERF-funded project.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Community Action Teams (CARTs – described on next page) were quickly contacted by the government to help **raise awareness** about COVID-19 and **mobilise the community**. The CARTs served as an **effective mode of communication between the government and communities** in this time of crisis. These examples show that the structures set up under GCERF grants can be adapted to respond to other crises and contribute to general community resilience. They also show that having trustworthy community structures and connecting them with government actors through the project can lead to sustained engagement between community and governments and makes it easier for governments to engage communities directly, improving accountability and governance.

Empowering Communities to Improve Governance



GCERF

COMMUNITY TESTIMONY: SAFER ELECTIONS

"We are so proud of our community since the CART came into existence. **CART played a very big role before the election.** They talked to the youth, the elders, and encouraged those who have interest to vote to come out and vote, not fight. The neighboring community came to seek advice, and communities invite CART members to talk to them."

- Community member interviewed by evaluators of CART project discussing the instrumental role of CARTs in ensuring peaceful elections

Community Led and Sustained: CARTs in Nigeria

Community-Action Response Teams (CARTs), local structures made up of diverse local community representatives and tasked with conflict prevention and resolution, were set up through a GCERF project in Kogi State in 2017. Local surveying in 2016 had found that farmer-herder disputes accounted for as much as 80% of all violence in these communities and is also a key driver of violent extremism, so this became the CARTs initial focus. The evaluation found that **CARTs have significantly reduced violence in the target communities.** A recent evaluation of the CARTs showed that the CARTs have become a vital part of community security and are working with key stakeholders to reduce levels of violence as well as pushing for greater community cohesion and development.

Community surveys conducted as part of the evaluation showed that the intervention by the CARTs is recognised as unique as it introduced conflict resolution techniques and mechanisms that were not previously present in the communities. Because of their added value, these mechanisms have taken root and been **sustained beyond the end of the project.** CARTs received **near universal recognition as legitimate actors** and this was linked to their perceived reliability and readiness to act to prevent and mitigate conflict. In fact, the CARTs are recognised by community members as second only to community leaders as the actors most responsible for violence prevention efforts, ahead of the vigilante groups who are often seen as primary security actors, and significantly ahead of police.

One reason for their high standing in local communities has been the key role CARTs have played in **bringing about and sustaining peace agreements in farmer-herder disputes,** helping the two groups to live together peacefully.

Following success in the first four communities, GCERF's partner is now working to scale up the project both horizontally (introducing it into new communities) and vertically (connecting the CARTs to government structures). The CART model is now being adopted by the Nigerian government to scale up across the country.

Independent Evaluation Survey Results: CARTs in Nigeria

Based on surveys with 658 community members across four communities

- Survey respondents familiar with CARTs overwhelmingly reported that CARTs are effective, with nearly **70% of respondents characterising CARTs as very effective in conflict resolution** and almost 60% portraying them as very effective in community mobilisation.
- **93% of those familiar with the CARTs see them as legitimate,** identifying reliability, trustworthiness, and effectiveness as the main factors for such legitimacy.

Story of Change: Communities Taking Control

Chief Onah Ngbede is a Traditional Ruler in Benue State, whose community benefitted from holistic community resilience programming run by the Women's Environmental Programme.

"We were confused when we were consistently being hit by attack upon attack. We believed we were helpless as we watched our homes destroyed, our crops stolen, and life generally made unbearable for us. We could not even define what exactly the problem was. Everyone was a suspect, including the security agents based in our communities. People were getting kidnapped on their way to the market and no one seemed to know what to do until this WEP project came. The various activities – from the dialogues to the trainings on PVE and peace building– **helped our community to find itself.** But what has stood out for us is the capacity building on community policing and neighborhood watching. **We have learned that there is something we can do.** As soon as we came back from the trainings, we went into action, setting up our community policing committee. We brought in security agents to support and **we have seen that working together with community members and security agencies has improved our security.** We now know who comes in and goes out of our communities, **security agents are more responsive, and our relationship with them is cordial and collaborative.** We now have community members who left coming back to the community. To crown it all, our major market, which was closed down due to security issues opened up in November 2020."

GCERF

Geneva, Switzerland

Find out more about becoming an investor, our work, and the collective impact we make at:

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